Donner Lake Interchange (DLI) Sand and Salt House Facility

NEVADA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
DISTRICT 3 - NEV-80, KP 14.6 (PM 9.07)
2C8000

Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration

Prepared by the State of California
Department of Transportation

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

What's in this document:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has prepared this Initial Study, which examines the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project located in Nevada County, California. This document describes why the project is being proposed, alternatives for the project, the existing environment that could be affected by the project, the potential impacts from each of the alternatives, and the proposed avoidance, minimization and/or mitigation measures.

What you should do:

- Please read this Initial Study. Additional copies of this document are available at the Nevada County Library at 10031 Levone Ave., Truckee, CA. The Truckee branch is open Monday and Thursday from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, and on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. Copies of the technical studies used to prepare this document are available for review at 2389 Gateway Oaks Drive, Sacramento, CA 95833.
- We welcome your comments. If you have any comments regarding the proposed project please send your written comments to the Department by the deadline.
- Submit comments via postal mail to:
  Jeremy Ketchum, Branch Chief, Environmental Management S1
  Attention: Jennifer S. Clark, Environmental Coordinator
  Dept. of Transportation, Office of Environmental Management
  2389 Gateway Oaks Drive
  Sacramento, CA 95833
- Submit comments via email to Jennifer_S_Clark@dot.ca.gov.
- Submit comments by the deadline: April 15, 2005.

What happens next:

After comments are received from the public and reviewing agencies, the Department may: (1) give environmental approval to the proposed project, (2) undertake additional environmental studies, or (3) abandon the project. If the project is given environmental approval and funding is appropriated, the Department could design and construct all or part of the project.

For individuals with sensory disabilities, this document can be made available in Braille, large print, on audiocassette, or on computer disk. To obtain a copy in one of these alternate formats, please call or write to: Department of Transportation, Attn: Jennifer S. Clark, 2389 Gateway Oaks Drive, Sacramento, CA 95833; (916) 274-0572 Voice or use the California Relay Service TTY number, (530) 741-4509.

SCH#
03-NEV-80-KP 14.6
(PM 9.07)
2C8000

Construct sand and salt house facility on Interstate 80 at the
Donner Lake Interchange (DLI), KP 14.6 (post mile 9.07)

INITIAL STUDY with Proposed Negative Declaration

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, California Public Resources Code

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation

7 March 2005
Date of Approval

John D. Webb, Chief
North Region Environmental Services
California Department of Transportation

PROPOSED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

Project Description

The Department of Transportation (Department) proposes to construct a sand and salt house facility on Interstate 80 (I-80) at the Donner Lake Interchange (DLI), KP 14.6 (PM 9.07), approximately seven miles west of Truckee. The facility will include permanent water quality treatment measures including a diversion ditch and an infiltration or detention basin. The purpose of this project is to enhance snow removal operations during the snow season, which will improve the mobility and safety of motorists and will improve the efficiency of maintenance efforts.

Determination

This proposed Negative Declaration (ND) is included to notify the interested agencies and the public that it is the Department's intent to adopt an ND for this project. This does not mean that the Department's decision regarding the project is final. This ND is subject to modification based upon comments received during the circulation period and the

The attached Initial Study for this project and pending review, expects to determine from the study that the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The project would have no effect on coastal zones, wild and scenic rivers, farmlands, timberlands, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, paleontology, growth, utilities, emergency services, traffic and transportation, cultural resources, hydrology and floodplains, geology, seismology, topography, hazardous waste/materials, air quality, parks, or noise. This project will have no cumulative impacts.

In addition, the proposed project would have a less than significant effect on land use, community resources, visual resources/aesthetics, water quality and storm water run-off, soils, and biological resources.

_____ _____

John D. Webb, Chief Date
North Region Environmental Services
California Department of Transportation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - PROPOSED PROJECT

Purpose and Need

The Department of Transportation (Department) proposes to construct a sand and salt house facility on Interstate 80 (I-80) at the Donner Lake Interchange (DLI), KP 14.6 (PM 9.07), approximately seven miles west of Truckee. See Figures 1 & 2 for Project Vicinity and Location Maps.

The purpose of this project is to enhance snow removal operations during the snow season, which will improve the mobility and safety of motorists and will improve the efficiency of maintenance efforts. Maintenance crews are currently using a sand house and salt bunker located at the Castle Peak Interchange on I-80, KP 8.16 (PM 5.07), to service this area of roadway during the snow season. The Castle Peak facility is small and the sand house and salt bunker, which were built in 1965, are suffering from rust and deterioration. In addition, snow removal operations can be delayed due to ingress and egress of traffic at the Castle Peak Interchange generated from the nearby Boreal Resort. The DLI site was identified as a more efficient and safer location.

The Castle Peak facility is located approximately five miles from the Kingvale Maintenance Station and approximately ten miles from the Truckee Maintenance Station. During snow removal operations, the trucks run out of sand between Kingvale and Truckee. The proposed DLI location is located approximately halfway between Kingvale and Truckee. The DLI facility will make snow removal more efficient as maintenance crews will not need to make additional trips to reload and cover missed areas due to lack of sand.

Project Description

The proposed facility will include a standard sand storage building (sand house) measuring 40 ft. by 80 ft. (12.2m x 24.4m) and a standard salt storage building (salt house) measuring 20 ft. by 40 ft. (7.3m x 12.2m). See Figure 3 for a diagram of the facilities. Each building will be constructed of concrete floors, wood framed walls with refinished metal siding, and refinished metal roofing. A layout of all the project features (in draft form) showing their approximate sizes is included as Figure 4. Construction will include the following:

<u>Proposed Project</u>

- Remove trees and vegetation.
- Grade and pave site.
- Construct a detention or infiltration basin.
- Construct a V-ditch with rock energy dissipater to direct surface flows off-site and slow flows prior to leaving the ditch.
- Build an AC dike at the edge of pavement to keep sand and salt on-site and to direct site run-off to the detention or infiltration basin.
- Build a salt house.
- Provide erosion control.
- Repave and widen access road.
- Build a sand house.
- Install power and lighting.

Construction of the salt house, AC dike, V-ditch, and detention or infiltration basin is expected to take place in the 2007 construction season. Construction of the sand house and improvements to the access road are expected to take place at a later time. Once the Donner Lake Interchange Facility is operational, the Castle Peak Facility may be demolished. However, this Initial Study does not examine the potential environmental impacts of the Castle Peak demolition and a separate environmental evaluation will be needed.

Alternatives

Build
This project has one build alternative as described in the "Project Description" section above. New right of way (R/W) will be acquired for this alternative.

No-Build
The No-Build alternative would do nothing to improve snow removal operations and to improve the mobility and safety of motorists. The Castle Peak Facility would continue to deteriorate and maintenance operations will continue to be inefficient if this project is not built.

Permits and Approvals Needed

This project will be covered by the Caltrans National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit (CAS # 000003, Order # 99-06-DWQ), issued by the State Water Resources Control Board. No other environmental permits will be needed.

FIGURE 1 - PROJECT VICINITY MAP

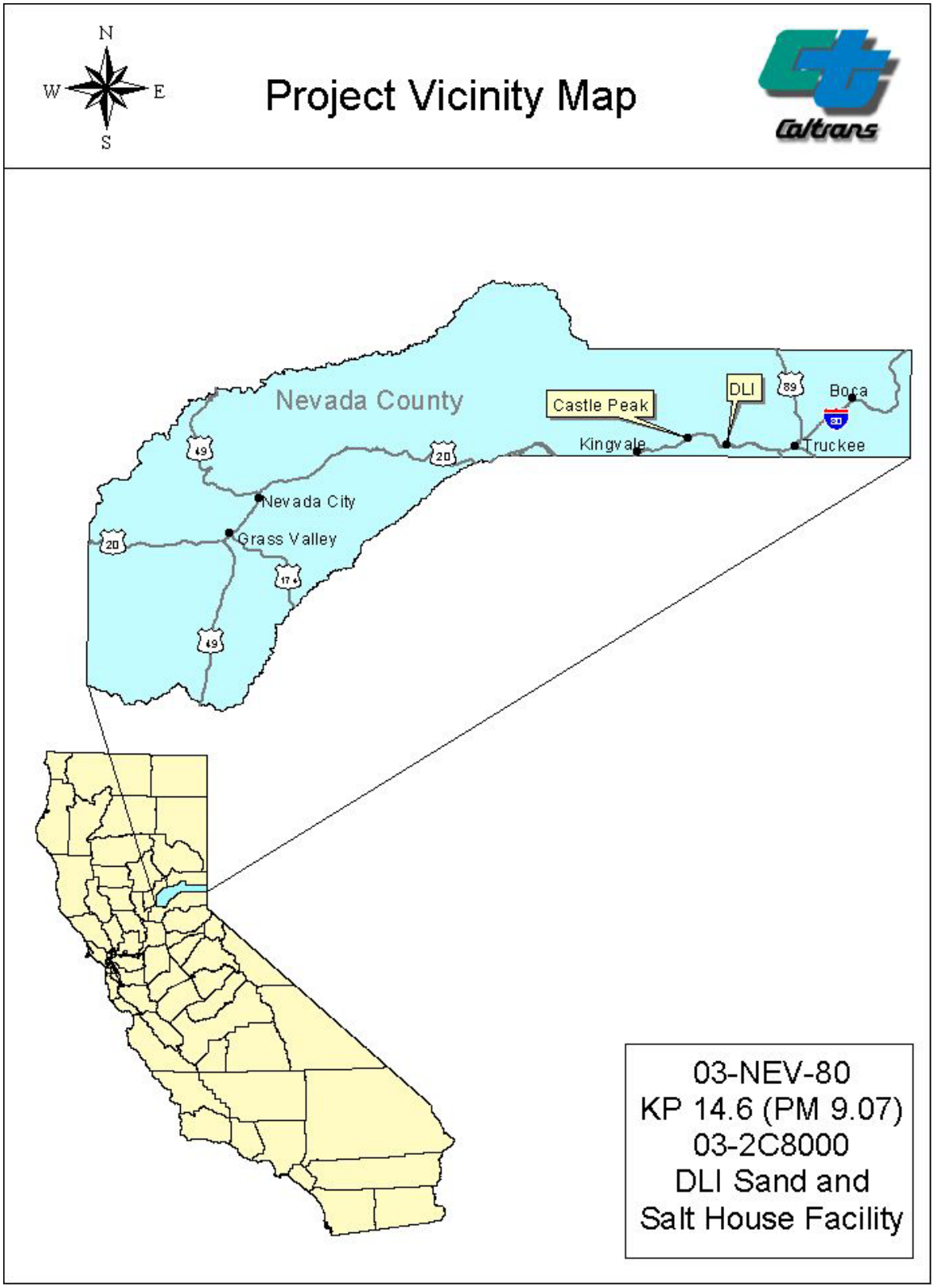


FIGURE 2 - PROJECT LOCATION MAP

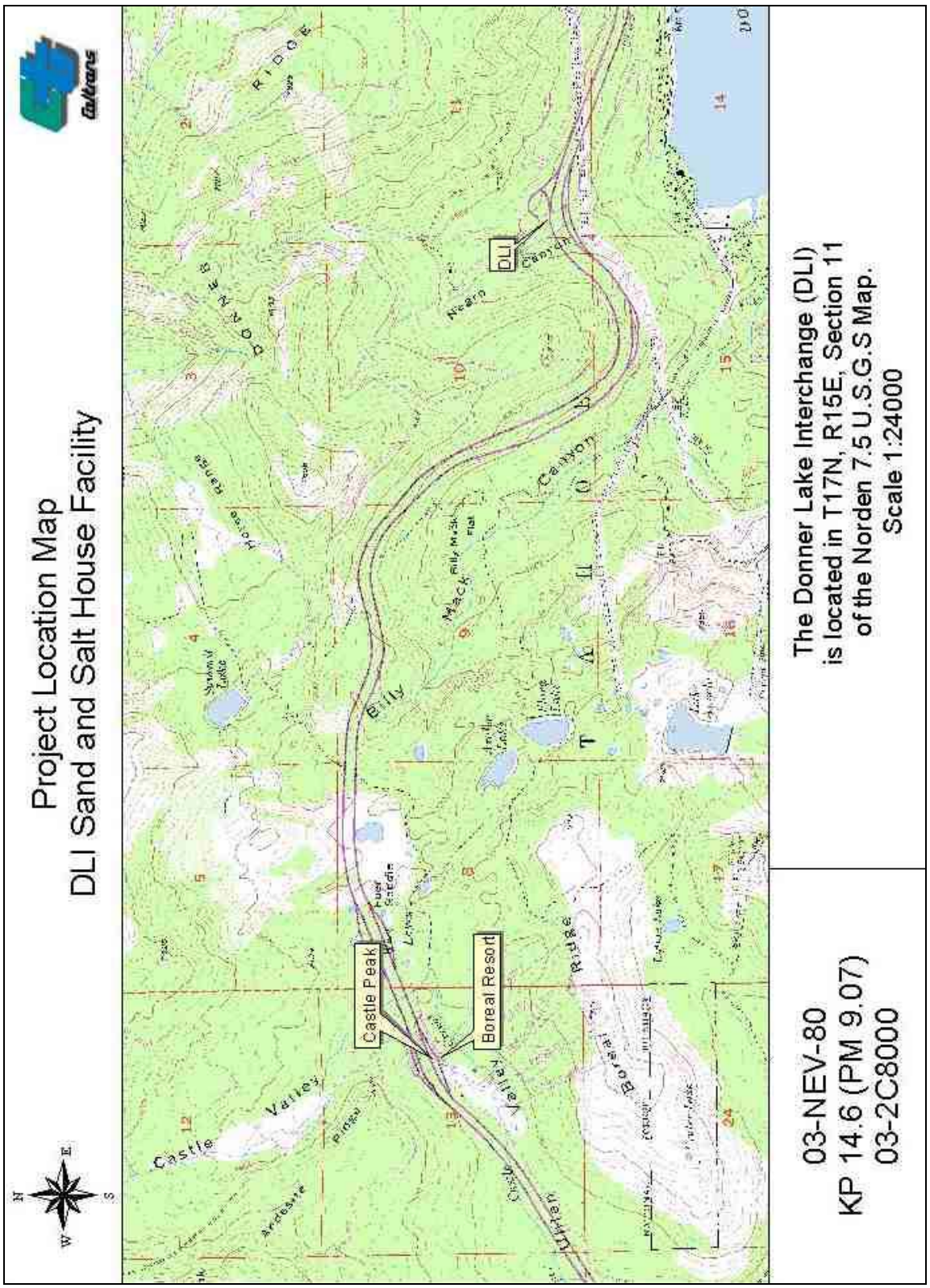


FIGURE 3 - BUILDING DIAGRAM

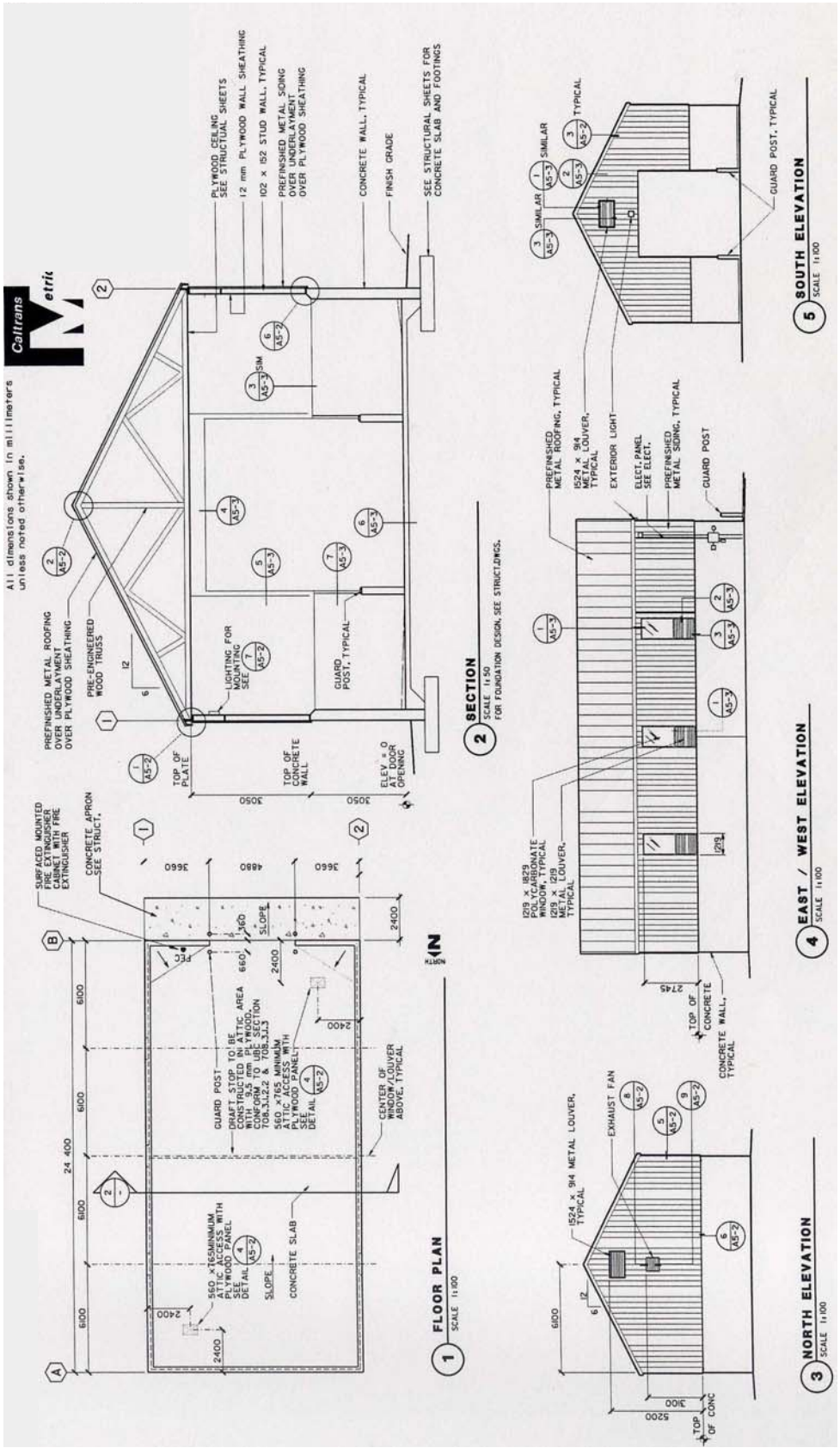


FIGURE 4 - PROJECT LAYOUT

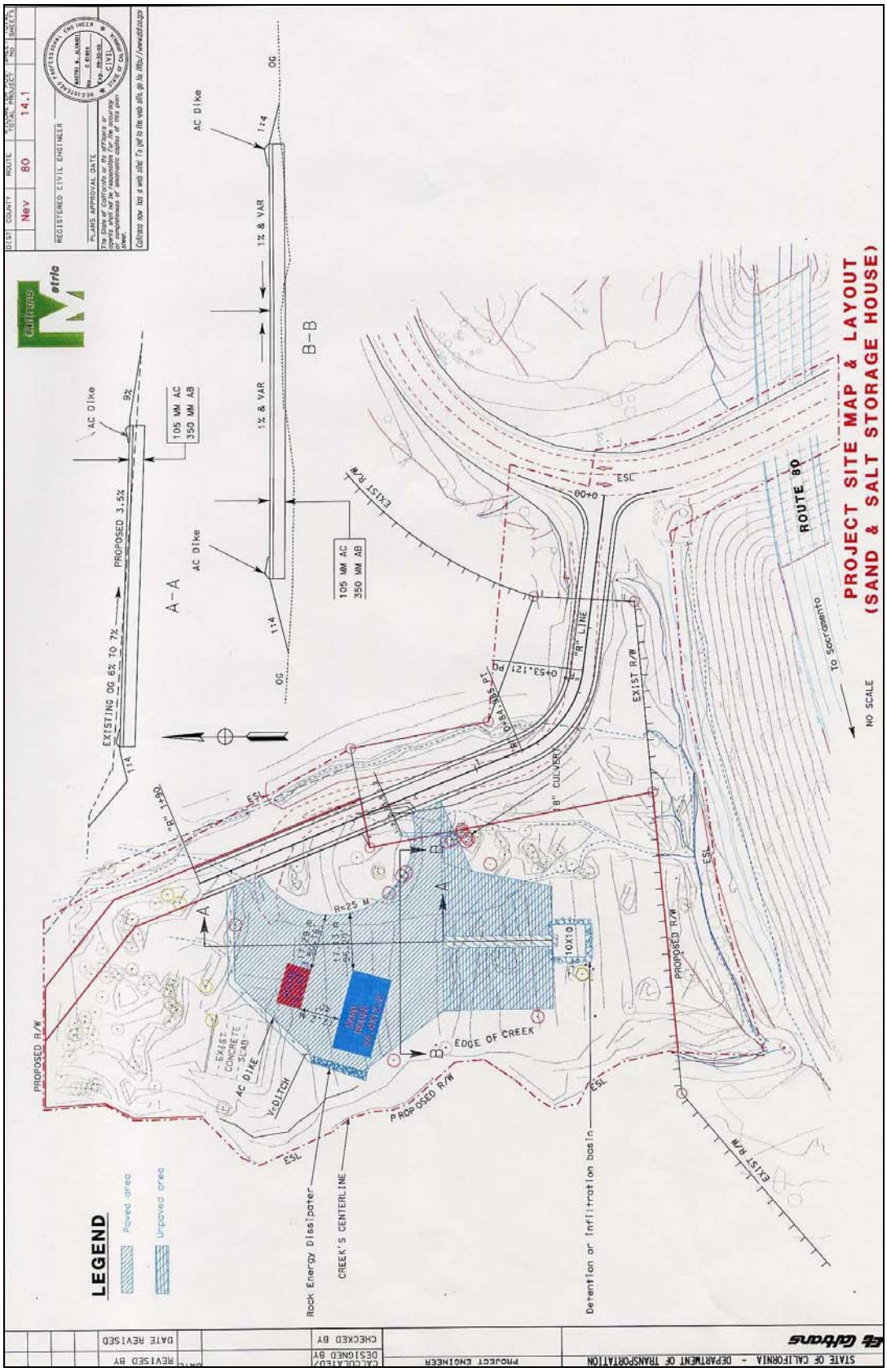
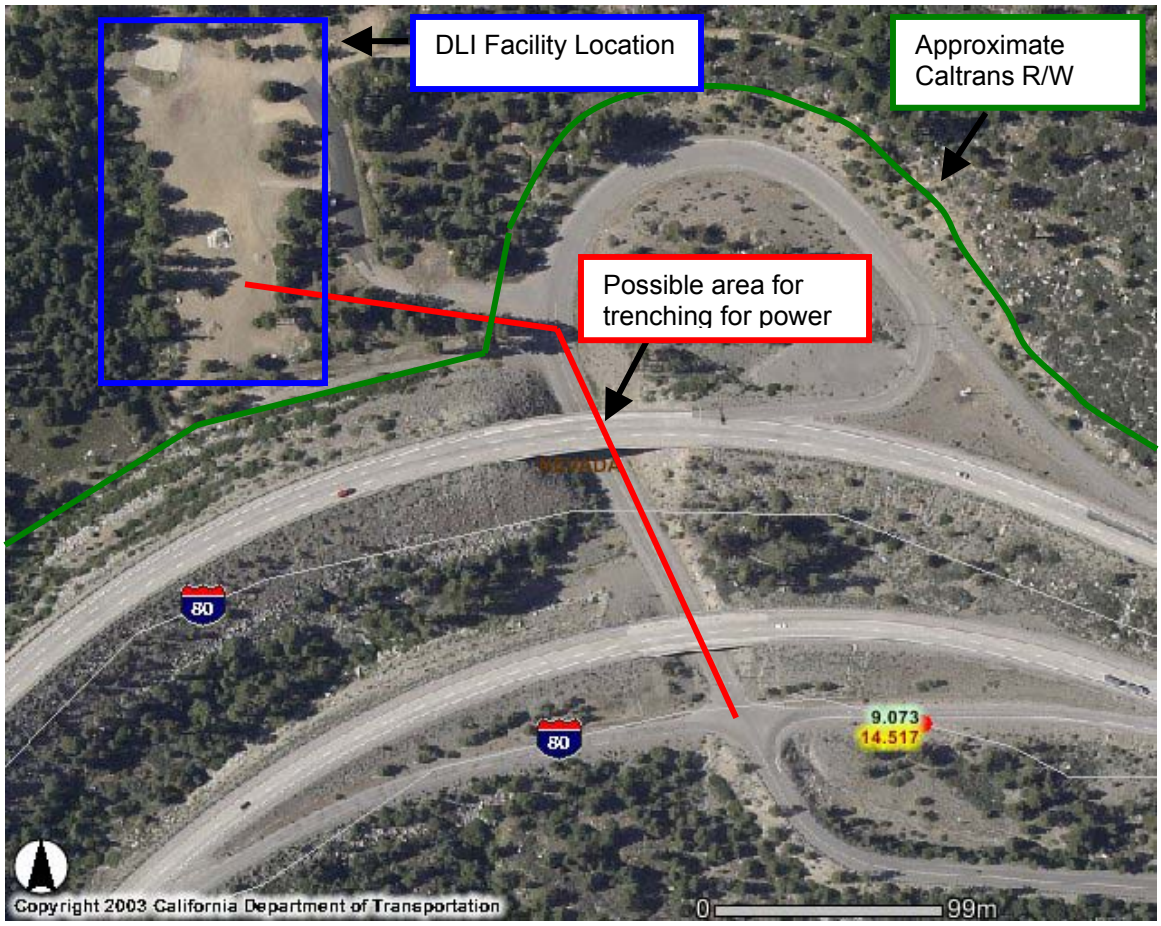
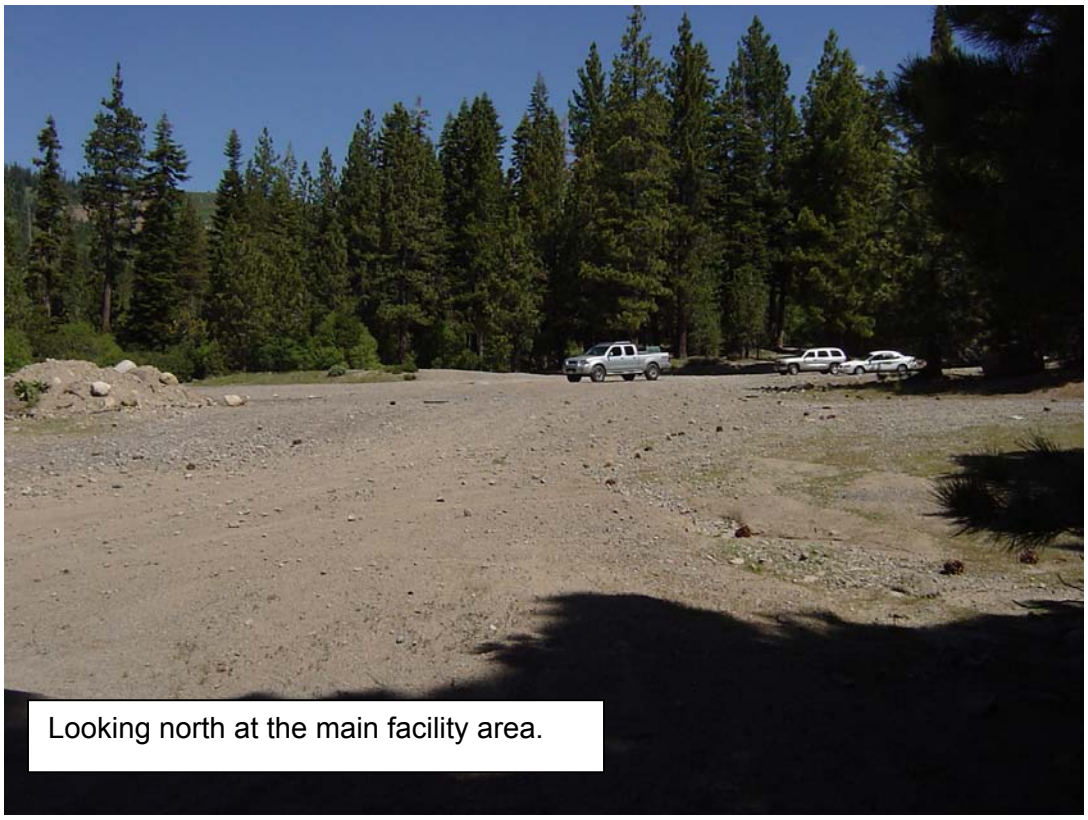


FIGURE 5 - AERIAL PHOTO



PROJECT PHOTOS

Looking northwest from the access road at one of the driveway areas.



Looking north at the main facility area.

CHAPTER 2 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES, AND AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION AND/OR MITIGATION MEASURES

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

As part of the scoping and environmental analysis conducted for the project, the following environmental resources were considered:

- Coastal Zone
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Farmlands/Timberlands
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities
- Paleontology

These resources are not present within project limits and will not be impacted by the project. No potential for adverse impacts to these resources was identified. Consequently, there is no further discussion regarding these resources in this document.

Land Use

Existing and Future Land Use

The proposed project site is located adjacent to the westbound I-80 off-ramp for Donner Lake. The Department has used this site previously for a Portland Cement Concrete (PCC) batch plant for the original construction of I-80 in the 1960s. Currently, the land is privately owned. It appears that the site is now being used for material storage by unknown sources.

The site is located on a small portion of two adjacent parcels of land, each approximately 300 acres. These parcels are zoned as "IDR" in the Nevada County General Plan. IDR is an interim zoning used to reflect and reserve the development potential of property designated as Planned Development and Special Development in the General Plan. Currently, the proposed project site and neighboring land is undeveloped. There are no formal plans to develop either of the parcels at this time. The amount of land needed for the project site will be less than 1% of the adjacent parcels. Impacts to land use will be less than significant.

Consistency with State, Regional and Local Plans

Goal 4.2 of the Nevada County General Plan's Circulation Element is to "Provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in a manner that respects the rural character of Nevada County." The purpose of this project is to enhance snow removal operations during the winter months. This will be in keeping with the above goal. Avoidance and minimization measures implemented to lessen the visual impacts of this project will help to maintain the rural character of Nevada County (See Visual/Aesthetics section for more information).

Parks and Recreational Facilities

The proposed project site is currently private property with no formal designation for parks or recreation facilities. Snowmobilers currently park their vehicles and trailers on the site to use the surrounding areas for recreation during the snow season. After this

project is constructed, the area acquired by the Department will not be available for use by snowmobilers. This project will not impact designated parks and recreational facilities.

Growth

The proposed project site is located adjacent to an existing off-ramp. Included in this project is the repaving of the road that extends from the off-ramp to the project site. Although improvements to the road are being made, no new access will be created. It is not anticipated that this project will induce growth.

Community impacts

This project will require the acquisition of approximately 3.5 acres of new right of way (R/W). The Department's R/W Division will coordinate with the property owners.

This project will improve the efficiency of snow removal during snow season, thereby benefiting the community and motorists who use this section of roadway. Impacts to the community will be less than significant.

Utilities/Emergency Services

This project will require a connection to an existing power source to provide electricity to the site. It is anticipated that trenching will be required to connect to either existing Department electrical facilities or to a Truckee Donner Public Utility District facility. Water and sewer will not be provided for the sand and salt house facility. This project will not have a significant impact to utilities.

This project will not affect emergency services.

Traffic and Transportation

This project will make snow removal operations more efficient and will help Maintenance to keep the roads open during snow season. The project site is off of the freeway and construction should not impact traffic or transportation.

Visual/Aesthetics

Regulatory Setting
The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes that it is the policy of the state to take all action necessary to provide the people of the state "with…enjoyment of *aesthetic*, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities." [CA Public Resources Code Section 21001(B)]

Impacts
A Visual Impact Assessment was prepared in August 2002 to analyze the project impacts on visual resources. The project site is mostly cleared land with some trees and vegetation (see Project Photos). The surrounding areas are primarily mixed conifer forest. The dominant plant type appears to be varying mixes of pine and fir. This site is lower in elevation from the freeway and is not part of any view shed as seen by passing

motorists. The road connecting to the site is used primarily to access and exit the freeway and is not heavily used. There is also no residential or commercial development in the immediate area. Currently, it appears that the site is being used for material storage by unknown sources as well as it being littered with trash and unwanted household items.

This section of I-80 is not a designated State Scenic Highway. However, the surrounding area is quite scenic and care should be given to development of this site. Various different configurations for the paving were analyzed to find an option that least impacted tree removal while providing adequate space for the trucks to maneuver. Implementing avoidance and minimization measures listed below will reduce any visual impacts that may occur. The overall project will have a less than significant impact to the visual quality of the area.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures
In order to minimize the visual impacts this project may cause, the following items shall be incorporated into the project design:

- The sand and salt house roofs and siding shall be painted a dark brown or green and shall be non-reflective to blend with the natural environment.
- Any tree that is removed shall be replaced at a ratio of one seedling for each 1" of tree trunk at diameter breast height (dbh).
- Plant species used for revegetation shall be native to the area.
- If rock is used for erosion control, it is preferred that indigenous rock is used. If the rock used does not blend with the natural environment, a rock coloration system shall be used.
- Prior to construction, Caltrans Maintenance will remove any trash within the newly acquired right of way.

Cultural Resources

Regulatory Setting
Under California law, cultural resources are protected by the CEQA as well as Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, which established the California Register of Historic Places. Section 5024.5 requires state agencies to provide notice to, and to confer with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) before altering, transferring, relocating, or demolishing state-owned historic resources.

Impacts
Record searches and a field review were performed and found that no historic properties exist within the project limits. A Historic Resources Compliance Report (HRCR) was completed and approved in July 2002 to document these findings. No impacts to cultural resources are expected to occur as a result of this project. However, should cultural resources be encountered during construction, the following avoidance and minimization measures will protect those resources.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures
In the remote event that archaeological materials (e.g. artifacts including, arrowheads, bottles, foundations etc.) are discovered during construction, it is Caltrans' policy that work temporarily cease in the area of the find until the Caltrans District Archeologist can evaluate the nature and significance of the materials and consult with the State Historic

Preservation Office about the disposition of the materials (Environmental Handbook, Vol. 2, Chapter 1). In the event that human remains are discovered or recognized during construction, there shall be no further excavation or disturbance of the site or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains until the appropriate county coroner has determined that the remains are not subject to provisions of Section 27491 of the Government Code. If the coroner determines the remains to be Native American, he shall contact the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) within 24 hours. The NAHC will appoint a Most Likely Descendent for disposition of the remains (Health and Safety Code Sect. 7050.5, Public Resources Code Sect. 5097.24).

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Hydrology and Floodplain

A Floodplain Analysis was prepared using data from the Department's Georgraphic Information Services (GIS) Library. The GIS data was obtained from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Floodplain Analysis found that the project limits are outside of the FEMA 100 Year Floodplain. This project will not affect a FEMA designated floodplain.

Water Quality and Storm Water Run-off

Regulatory Setting

The primary federal law regulating Water Quality is the Clean Water Act. To ensure compliance with Clean Water Act, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) has issued a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Statewide Storm Water Permit to regulate storm water discharges from Department facilities. The permit regulates storm water discharges from the Department right-of-way during and after construction, as well as from existing facilities and operations.

In addition, the SWRCB has issued a construction general permit for most construction activities covering greater than 1 acre (0.40 hectare), that are part of a Common Plan of Development exceeding 5 acres (2.02 hectare) or that have the potential to significantly impair water quality. Some construction activities may require an individual construction permit. All Department projects that are subject to the construction general permit require a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), while all other projects require a Water Pollution Control Program (WPCP). Subject to the Department's review and approval, the contractor prepares either the SWPPP or the WPCP. The SWPPP and WPCP identify construction activities that may cause pollutants in storm water and measures to control these pollutants. Since neither the SWPPP nor the WPCP are prepared at this time, the following discussion focuses on anticipated pollution controls.

Impacts

The proposed project site is located in the Truckee River Hydrological Unit (HU) number 635.20, Nevada County, and resides within Negro Canyon. There is an unnamed stream just west of the project site, which is bordered by riparian vegetation. The stream is a tributary to Donner Lake, an impaired water body. Drainage patterns resulting from uphill snowmelt and summer storms are evident. Annual average precipitation for this HU is listed as 41 inches.

This project will have a diversion ditch (V-ditch) constructed that will intercept the flow of water resulting from snowmelt and summer storms (see Figure 4 for project layout). The V-ditch will carry the water to the west side of the pavement and empty out above the riparian vegetation. A rock energy dissipater will be constructed at this point to slow the flow of water before it travels over the riparian vegetation and into the creek. This diversion ditch drainage system alters the existing water flow patterns. However, this change in flow patterns will have no impact to the site since the property is barren and its soil is compacted from its original use as a batch plant. The upland species (pine trees) to the east of the property will continue to receive water from a constructed cross culvert at the entrance driveway.

All of the drainage from the asphalt concrete and the roofs of structures will be treated on site by either an infiltration or detention basin. The basin will have an appropriately sized rock lined overflow structure to slow water flows and prevent erosion. Impervious surface storm water runoff will not have an adverse impact on the creek or its tributary.

The construction of the diversion ditch (V-ditch), treatment basin, and rock energy dissipater will result in less than significant water quality impacts.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

Adherence to the following is recommended to prevent receiving water pollution as a result of construction activities and/or operation of this section of I-80:

- The project shall adhere to the conditions of the Caltrans Statewide NPDES Permit CAS # 000003, Order # 99-06-DWQ, issued by the State Water Resources Control Board.
- Since this project's disturbed soil area would exceed at least 1 acre of land, Standard Special Provision 07-345 shall be included in the Plans, Specifications & Estimate (PS&E) to address temporary construction water pollution control measures.
- This project will require a SWPPP containing project specific effective erosion and sediment control measures. These measures must address soil stabilization practices, sediment control practices, tracking control practices, and wind erosion control practices. In addition, the project plan must include non-storm water controls, waste management and material pollution controls.
- An infiltration and or detention basin will be constructed to minimize pollutants resulting from the normal use of the facility.
- A report of Notification of Construction (NOC) shall be submitted to the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (LRWQCB) at least 30 days prior to the start of construction.

Geology/Soils/Seismic/Topography

This project will require grading in order to allow the site to drain. Erosion control methods will be used to avoid additional loss of topsoil. Impacts to soils will be less than significant. There will be no geology, seismic, or topography impacts from this project.

Hazardous Waste/Materials

An Initial Site Assessment (ISA) was prepared in April 2002 for this project. It was determined that no hazardous waste is expected to be encountered within the project limits.

Air Quality

Table 2 of 40 CFR 93.126 (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 40, Part 93.126-Determining Conformity of Federal Actions to State or Federal Implementation Plan) lists projects that do not require project-level air quality analysis. This project falls under Table 2, Safety, safety improvement program, and therefore does not require an air quality analysis.

Any short-term air quality impacts related to construction activities will be minimized by Caltrans Standard Specifications, Section 7-1.01F, "Air Pollution Control" and Section 10, "Dust Control."

Noise

This project is not interpreted as a Type 1 project (construction of a highway on a new location, or the physical alteration of an existing highway which significantly changes either the horizontal or vertical alignment, or increases the number of through traffic lanes) as defined by Caltrans' Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol for New Highway Construction and Reconstruction Projects and no further analysis is required.

BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

As part of the scoping and environmental analysis conducted for the project, the biological resources listed below were considered:

- Natural Communities
- Wetlands and Other Waters
- Plant Species
- Animal Species
- Threatened & Endangered Species
- Invasive Species

A literature search was conducted to investigate the potential presence of species and habitats of concern within the project vicinity. A compilation of biological resources was created based on information queried for the Truckee and Norden quadrangles from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), and the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). Field reviews were conducted May-June 2004 by a qualified Caltrans biologist to assess the biological environment of the project area.

Based on literature and field reviews, natural communities, threatened and endangered species, and invasive species were found not to be present within the project limits and will not be impacted by the project. No potential for adverse impacts to these resources was identified; consequently, there is no further discussion regarding them.

Wetlands and Other Waters

There are no wetlands within the project site. There are two hydrologic features: an unnamed stream through Negro Canyon on the west of the project area and an

unnamed tributary to this stream on the east side of the project area. The eastern tributary runs parallel to the east side of the county road until it crosses under, runs through some trees, and then along the toe of the highway slope until it deposits into Negro Canyon. The Negro Canyon stream runs along the west side of the project area, through a riparian corridor, then goes under the highway through a long, steep culvert. These adjacent sources of waters will be protected by avoidance and minimization measures as outlined in the Water Quality section.

Plant Species

Regulatory Setting

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) share regulatory responsibility for the protection of special-status plant species. "Special-status" species are selected for protection because they are rare and/or subject to population and habitat declines. Special status is a general term for species that are afforded varying levels of regulatory protection. The highest level of protection is given to threatened and endangered species; these are species that are formally listed or proposed for listing as endangered or threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) and/or the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).

This section of the document discusses all the other special-status plant species, including CDFG fully protected species and species of special concern, USFWS candidate species, and non-listed California Native Plant Society (CNPS) rare and endangered plants.

The regulatory requirements for FESA can be found at United States Code 16 (USC), Section 1531, et. seq. See also 50 CFR Part 402. The regulatory requirements for CESA can be found at California Fish and Game Code, Section 2050, et. seq. Department projects are also subject to the Native Plant Protection Act, found at Fish and Game Code, Section 1900-1913, and the California Environmental Quality Act, Public Resources Code, Sections 2100-21177.

Impacts

The site lacks vegetation except for some upland plant species along its northern and eastern property lines and riparian species along the creek, which is to the west of the site. Based on the literature search, only one sensitive plant species has a high potential to occur within the project area – clustered lady's slipper (*Cypripedium fasciculatum*). After a field review, however, no species were located within or adjacent to the project area. Thus, the project will have no adverse impact on this species.

Some vegetation and tree removal will be required for construction of this project. In the course of project development, several different site plans were developed to find a plan that would require the least amount of paved area, which would result in fewer trees needing removal. The amount of pavement originally planned was approximately 0.89 acre; the final design should result in 0.72 acre of pavement. The proposed design shown in Figure 4 required the least amount of tree removal while still providing adequate space for trucks to maneuver. Impacts to vegetation and trees will be less than significant.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

- Because the habitat of the project area, in general, is native species, Caltrans will incorporate standard measures during construction to prevent the introduction of non-native species.

- Following construction, revegetation of the site will occur as outlined in the Visual/Aesthetics section.

Animal Species

Regulatory Setting

Many state and federal laws regulate impacts to wildlife. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) are responsible for implementing these laws. This section discusses potential impacts and permit requirements associated with special-status animal species, including CDFG fully protected species and species of special concern, and USFWS or NOAA Fisheries candidate species.

Federal laws and regulations pertaining to wildlife include the following:

- National Environmental Policy Act
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act

State laws and regulations pertaining to wildlife include the following:

- California Environmental Quality Act
- Sections 1601 – 1603 of the Fish and Game Code
- Section 4150 and 4152 of the Fish and Game Code

Impacts

The proposed project site is a large open area and provides limited habitat for wildlife. The surrounding areas and creek provide habitat for birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Based on the literature search performed for the project, it was determined that the following special-status species had a high potential to occur within the project area. The analysis was based on habitat needs, known populations, and survey results, which helped determine which species may be adversely affected by the proposed project.

Olive-sided flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*)
Hermit warbler (*Dendroice occidentalis*)
Little willow flycatcher (*Epidonax trailii brewsteri*)
White-headed woodpecker (*Picoides albolarvatus*)
Rufus hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)
Pale big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens*)
Long-eared myotis bat (*Myotis evotis*)
Long-legged myotis bat (*Myotis volans*)
Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare (Lepus americanus tahoensis)
Sierra Nevada red fox (*Vulpes vulpes necator*)

Field surveys conducted for the project did not result in any evidence or sightings of these species within the project area, and the project is not expected to have a

permanent impact on their status. There may be temporary disturbances during construction requiring some species that may forage in the area to forage elsewhere. However, this is not expected to greatly affect individuals because adequate foraging habitat exists within close proximity to the project site.

While the project is under construction any species directly adjacent to the project may be temporarily displaced. However, displacement seems unlikely, because the site is typically busy during the summer months and species in the area are accustomed to disturbance. Any displacement would be temporary and the species are expected to return once construction is completed. Because the facility will mainly be used in the winter months, increased use of the site is not expected to have an effect on deer, birds, mammals, etc.

The project site is located within summer mule deer habitat. These deer migrate through the area and down to Donner Lake. This particular population moves throughout homes and roads during the summer when it is present. A maintenance database of deer kill shows that there is a "hot spot" of deer mortality on the section of I-80 just south of the project area. In the last ten years, there has been an above average recorded number of 21 deer picked up by maintenance crews. The introduction of the sand and salt house is not expected to change the daily movement of deer. Because there will be limited operation at the facility during the summer, disturbance is expected to be limited. Furthermore, it may be argued that the site will be improved from the existing situation because there is currently substantial disturbance throughout the summer months, including but not limited to, equipment operation, illegal dumping and unauthorized parking. Disturbance is expected to be less once the project is completed, and the open space that is now unvegetated will be hydro-seeded with native grasses and herbs. Eventually the undeveloped areas should revegetate naturally.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

- Because the habitat of the project area, in general, is native species, Caltrans will incorporate standard measures during construction to prevent the introduction of non-native species; post construction revegetation will be as outlined in Visual/Aesthetics using only native species.
- Caltrans will remove as few trees as possible. All trees to be removed will either be removed outside of the breeding season for birds, or pre-construction surveys will be conducted to determine the presence of nesting birds. If the trees cannot be removed outside of the nesting period and there are nesting birds, Caltrans will contact the CDFG and determine what steps need to be done to avoid impacts.
- If bats are found to be roosting in any of the trees slated for removal, Caltrans will contact CDFG to determine further measures.
- Construction will be limited to daylight hours to minimize impacts to the daily movement of deer through the project area. Furthermore, Caltrans will monitor deer activity throughout construction to determine if construction activities are causing any change in deer movement.
- Post-construction activities during the summer will be limited, and crews will not be using the area to store material or equipment in the spring, summer, and early fall. This will allow Caltrans to minimize activities when deer are likely to be present.
- Caltrans will continue to work closely with the CDFG to improve deer passage at this section of I-80 at the Donner Lake interchange.

CHAPTER 3 - LIST OF PREPARERS AND TECHNICAL STUDIES

The people listed below assisted in preparing and evaluating this Initial Study and its associated technical reports. The technical reports were prepared in order to analyze the potential affects this project may have on the environment and to assist in preparing this Initial Study. These documents are available for review Caltrans North Region Office of Environmental Management, 2389 Gateway Oaks Drive, Sacramento, CA 95833.

Mastri Alvandi	Project Engineer
Cindy Anderson	Associate Environmental Planner
Rajive Chadha	Environmental Engineer, Hazardous Waste (Initial Site Assessment for Hazardous Waste)
Jennifer Clark	Associate Environmental Planner (Floodplain Analysis)
Kathleen Grady	Landscape Associate (Visual Impact Assessment)
John Holder	Transportation Engineer, Water Quality (Storm Water Quality Assessment)
Jeremy Ketchum	Senior Environmental Planner, S1 Branch Chief
Dave Lopez	Project Manager
Suzanne Melim	Associate Environmental Planner, Biology (Natural Environment Study)
Daryl Noble	Associate Environmental Planner, Archaeology (Historic Resources Compliance Report)
Ben Tam	Transportation Engineer, Air and Noise (Noise and Air Quality Evaluations)

CHAPTER 4 - DISTRIBUTION LIST

This Initial Study will be sent to the following parties for review and comments:

State Clearinghouse (to be distributed to various state agencies)
Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board
Affected Property Owners
Nevada County Clerk Recorder
Nevada County Board of Supervisors
Nevada County Library (to make available for public review)

APPENDIX A: CEQA CHECKLIST

The following checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the proposed project. The CEQA impact levels include potentially significant impact, less the significant impact with mitigation incorporation, less than significant impact, and no impact. Please refer to the following for detailed discussions regarding impacts:

CEQA:

- Guidance: Title 14, Chapter 3, California Code of Regulation, Sections 15000 et seq. (http://www.ceres.ca.gov/topic/env_law/ceqa/guidelines/)
- Statutes: Division 13, California Public Resource Code, Sections 21000-21178.1 (http://www.ceres.ca.gov/topic/env_law/ceqa/stat/)

	CEQA			
	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
AESTHETICS - Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	☐	☐	☑	☐
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☐	☑
AGRICULTURE RESOURCES - In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. Would the project:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☑
AIR QUALITY - Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute	☐	☐	☐	☑

	CEQA			
	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?				
c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	☐	☐	☐	☑
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☐	☑
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☐	☑
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES - Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☐	☐	☑
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☐	☑	☐
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☐	☑
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community	☐	☐	☐	☑

	CEQA			
	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?				
CULTURAL RESOURCES - Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☐	☑
d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☐	☐	☑
GEOLOGY AND SOILS - Would the project:				
a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	☐	☐	☐	☑
ii. Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☐	☑
iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☐	☑
iv. Landslides?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☐	☑	☐
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	☐	☐	☐	☑
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☐	☑

	CEQA			
	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	☐	☐	☐	☑
HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS - Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☑
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☑
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☑
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☑
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☑
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	☐	☐	☐	☑

CEQA			
Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact

HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY – Would the project:

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner, which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?	☐	☐	☑	☐
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner, which would result in flooding on- or off-site?	☐	☐	☑	☐
e) Create or contribute runoff water, which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	☐	☐	☐	☑
f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	☐	☐	☑	☐
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	☐	☐	☐	☑
h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures, which would impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☐	☑
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	☐	☐	☐	☑
j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	☐	☐	☐	☑

	CEQA			
	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
LAND USE AND PLANNING - Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☑
MINERAL RESOURCES - Would the project:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	☑
NOISE - Would the project result in:				
a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	☐	☐	☐	☑
d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	☐	☐	☐	☑
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☑

	CEQA			
	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☑
POPULATION AND HOUSING - Would the project:				
a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☑
PUBLIC SERVICES - Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
a) Fire protection?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Police protection?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Schools?	☐	☐	☐	☑
d) Parks?	☐	☐	☐	☑
e) Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☑
RECREATION -				
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☐	☑

	CEQA			
	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☑
TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC - Would the project:				
a) Cause an increase in traffic, which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?	☐	☐	☐	☑
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	☑
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☐	☑
f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?	☐	☐	☐	☑
g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?	☐	☐	☐	☑
UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS - Would the project:				
a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☐	☑

	CEQA			
	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	☐	☐	☐	☑
e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider, which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☐	☑
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	☐	☐	☐	☑
g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	☑

MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE -

a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☐	☐	☑
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	☐	☐	☐	☑
c) Does the project have environmental effects, which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☐	☐	☑

APPENDIX B: TITLE VI POLICY STATEMENT

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—BUSINESS, TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING AGENCY GRAY DAVIS, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
1120 N STREET
P. O. BOX 942873
SACRAMENTO, CA 94273-0001
PHONE (916) 654-5267
FAX (916) 654-6608

July 26, 2000

TITLE VI
POLICY STATEMENT

The California State Department of Transportation under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes, ensures that no person in the State of California shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex and national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity it administers.

Jeff Morales

JEFF MORALES
Director

APPENDIX C: AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION SUMMARY

VISUAL/AESTHETICS

- The sand and salt house roofs and siding shall be painted a dark brown or green and should be non-reflective to blend with the natural environment.
- Any tree that is removed shall be replaced at a ratio of one seedling for each 1" of tree trunk at diameter breast height (dbh).
- Plant species used for revegetation shall be native to the area.
- If rock is used for erosion control, it is preferred that indigenous rock is used. If the rock used does not blend with the natural environment, a rock coloration system shall be used.
- Prior to construction, Caltrans Maintenance will remove any trash within the newly acquired right of way.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

- In the remote event that archaeological materials (e.g. artifacts including, arrowheads, bottles, foundations etc.) are discovered during construction, it is Caltrans' policy that work temporarily cease in the area of the find until the Caltrans District Archeologist can evaluate the nature and significance of the materials and consult with the State Historic Preservation Office about the disposition of the materials (Environmental Handbook, Vol. 2, Chapter 1). In the event that human remains are discovered or recognized during construction, there shall be no further excavation or disturbance of the site or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains until the appropriate county coroner has determined that the remains are not subject to provisions of Section 27491 of the Government Code. If the coroner determines the remains to be Native American, he shall contact the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) within 24 hours. The NAHC will appoint a Most Likely Descendent for disposition of the remains (Health and Safety Code Sect. 7050.5, Public Resources Code Sect. 5097.24).

WATER QUALITY AND STORM WATER RUNOFF

- The project shall adhere to the conditions of the Caltrans Statewide NPDES Permit CAS # 000003, Order # 99-06-DWQ, issued by the State Water Resources Control Board.
- Since this project's disturbed soil area would exceed 1 acre of land; Standard Special Provision 07-345 shall be included in the Plans, Specifications & Estimate (PS&E) to address temporary construction water pollution control measures.
- This project will require a SWPPP containing project specific effective erosion and sediment control measures. These measures must address soil stabilization practices, sediment control practices, tracking control practices, and wind erosion control practices. In addition, the project plan must include non-storm water controls, waste management and material pollution controls.
- An infiltration and or detention basin will be constructed to minimize pollutants resulting from the normal use of the facility.
- A report of Notification of Construction (NOC) shall be submitted to the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (LRWQCB) at least 30 days prior to the start of construction.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- Because the habitat of the project area, in general, is native species, Caltrans will incorporate their standard measures during construction to prevent the introduction of non-native species, and post construction revegetation will be as outlined in Visual/Aesthetics using only native species.
- Caltrans will remove as few trees as possible. All trees to be removed will either be removed outside of the breeding season for birds, or pre-construction surveys will be conducted to determine the presence of nesting birds. If the trees cannot be removed outside of the nesting period and there are nesting birds, Caltrans will contact the CDFG and determine what steps need to be done to avoid impacts.
- If bats are found to be roosting in any of the trees slated for removal, Caltrans will contact CDFG to determine further measures.
- Construction will be limited to daylight hours to minimize impacts to the daily movement of deer through the project area. Furthermore, Caltrans will monitor deer activity throughout construction to determine if construction activities are causing any change in deer movement.
- Post-construction activities during the summer will be limited, and crews will not be using the area to store material or equipment in the spring, summer, and early fall. This will allow Caltrans to minimize activities when deer are likely to be present.
- Caltrans will continue to work closely with the CDFG to improve deer passage at this section of I-80 at the Donner Lake interchange.